

average of culture and practical skill is so high as to make a General Register possible and desirable, such a register will doubtless be established"! Comment might almost seem superfluous, but we must make a few remarks, upon this admission of all our contention, in our next Number.

### L'HÔTEL DIEU.

UP and down in the gathering darkness, the firelight laying lights and shades across my path, slowly I am pacing to and fro, with a drowsy baby in my arms. The night is closing in, the din and rush of the great city sound afar beyond the gates, and the stillness of the evening hour seems to wrap us round. The wavering gleams fall uncertainly, on lofty walls fading into the twilight's undistinguishable gloom, on windows many and dim, the "dead eyes of a house." An ancient heritage? Ancient enough, in very truth; the heirloom of the sick and sorrowful, through the charity of past centuries. As the embers brilliantly re-ignite, their glowing light falls, not athwart emblazoned banners, or dark rafters, but on the white beds and trim curtains of a Hospital Ward, and Nurse stepping softly to and fro, with this sleepy baby of the poor dozing on her shoulder.

A wasted little unit taken from the city millions, a forlorn little waif, whose happiest record will be, perhaps, the days he has spent among us, fed, clothed, and cared for as he has seldom been in his sad little span of life. Think of him, mothers, hushing your bairns to prayer in country homes, among country lanes and meadows, brought to us maimed and senseless, this baby of three, with his tiny limbs attenuated by a brief lifetime's acquaintance with privation, and the unchildlike sagacity of the children of the poor looking out of the wide blue eyes. A preternaturally clever baby with the pathetic shrewdness of necessity underlying the quickness of intelligent childhood. He has the making of something in him, we say, casting his horoscope, but which way his natural abilities will lead him, who can say? Whether he will be blest with a training to form him into a good and useful citizen, or whether this acuteness of wit and memory will, unchecked by teaching and uplifting, be perverted into the worst of here-afters, all this is far, far, beyond our ken. But as I look down on the little face nestled on my shoulder, I think of what our baby's surroundings may be when he goes hence, and futurity is not a promising vision.

We are quiet for awhile. Tea is cleared away,

and our convalescents are gossiping round the fire, or taking deliberate evening walks to and fro, under the watchful eye of authority. We hear very often, of Nature's good breeding; how often do we see in a Hospital Nurse's experience of humanity, the charity and tenderness of the poor to the poor! They are ready to help, to sympathise, and console, so prompt to share extra comforts, such willing scribes when they can be—otherwise Nurse is the *notaire publique*—that their best qualities shine out in relation to their sometime neighbours. Our bright little foreigner has limped off to refresh a depressed bonnet on a chair by a quiet country body's bed. Only Marietta's sharp eyes had noticed a tear or two stealing down the lonely patient's cheeks, far away from her kith and kin, and a friendly call has cheered No. 18 into a brighter mood. Marietta's graphic remark that no one is so sick as to be obligingly silent, holds good. There are empty beds, many convalescents, and the "Ward is mostly up," for there is not the hush and quiet that they know so well, when one visitor enters whom no gates can bar out. There is a quaint little woman, learning to write with her left hand—a quiet little servant maid watches her from the next bed, with sad, far-seeing eyes that are looking into that Beyond, to which, no unwilling traveller, she is wending her way. Transplanted from her green pastures into the "labyrinth of stone, and treeless streets by miles," she has drooped and faded like the wild flowers of that country home might have done. Babies we have three or four, beside my special nursling—and, perhaps, by midnight our empty beds will be filled by some of the many accidents of city streets. So our populations ebb and flow in this little kingdom. It is not often that Nurse has leisure for a lullaby like this, which has soothed our little one to sleep, and a still smaller baby has crept into Sister's room and dozed off, with a goodly ration of biscuits, before her fire.

The light is dimmer, the darkness falling deeper and deeper round us. The hour warns Nurse to lay her clinging little burden in the cot, and begin her evening work. The shadows flee from the corners—the fire blazes anew, and my twilight musings end abruptly as the clock chimes solemnly above the great gate. The hum and roar of the vast city sound unceasing and monotonous—the surging of the ocean of life that flows round the Hôtel Dieu, and casts up its waifs and strays, its flotsam and jetsam on the shore. It is our lot to rescue the shipwrecked and destitute, to give a kindly word and helping hand before the frail bark again faces the stormy deep, to find in some far and unknown country, a haven of rest.

R. OLIVER.

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